

# *Virginia* WILDLIFE

NOVEMBER, 1951



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*Photo by H. Armstrong Roberts*

### **Steady Does It!**

A beautiful setter on perfect point in a November brown field is one of the great fascinating sights known to outdoors-loving man. Can't you just hear the heartbeat of this nerve-tingled gunner?



# Virginia WILDLIFE

Published by VIRGINIA COMMISSION OF GAME AND INLAND FISHERIES, Richmond 13, Virginia  
A Monthly Magazine Dedicated to the Conservation, Restoration, and Wise Use of Virginia's Wildlife and  
Related Natural Resources, and to the Betterment of Hunting and Fishing in Virginia

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### Cover

*Fish & Wildlife Service photo by Rex Schmidt*

Here they come! Great-hearted Canadas, their voices babbling an incoherent discourse, wings fanning the breeze in audible strokes, necks crooked, eyes sweeping. They're landing, gentlemen—landing. A sight to behold on any river or marsh, anywhere.

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# Give Thanks

THE American outdoorsman is the luckiest sportsman in the world. While he may gripe a little and find the coverts less filled with game than did his counterpart of ten decades past, he still enjoys access to a great deal of hunting and fishing—and his freedom of movement is still pretty much what his conscience dictates.

While it is true that our ever-growing continental population has imposed necessary restrictions on bag limits, size of creel, and the open season *and* an ever-constricting environment has been forced upon much of our wildlife, we still have more outdoor recreation open to us than our work permits. This situation does not prevail in many foreign countries today where outdoor pursuits are enjoyed only by class or by a privileged few.

In Europe, game belongs to the individual who can afford to hunt *and buy* the hunting rights on large parcels of land. Johnny Nimrod doesn't have a chance. He not only doesn't have a right to hunt but he doesn't even possess the right to own a gun. This is particularly true of communist-dominated lands where the ownership of a gun—any type of gun—is against the laws of the state and is punishable by death or an unknown stretch in a far-off work camp.

In other parts of the world, even where there is opportunity, the people are so poor that they cannot afford to buy guns and shells. This is particularly true of the Far Eastern countries, much of South and Central America, and even in our bordering Mexico.

Whenever I hear the age-old complaint from an American gunner that there is no game to hunt and no place to hunt it, I am reminded of the recent trip of two Army men in a jeep in treeless Greece. After traveling all day from dawn until dusk, looking for signs of animal life in the desolate Grecian hills, their total wildlife count was one rabbit and one raven!

In America you can still hunt and you can still fish and you can still get something for your labors. All you need to do is be humble, be a little thankful, be a gentleman or a gentlewoman. If you approach a landowner in the right spirit, if you show him you're a *real* sportsman, a good person, chances are you'll not have too much trouble using his property. Sportsmen—and this kind are many—who make friends with the farmer by showing an interest in conservation work and lending a helping hand or providing seed, need never worry about posted signs.

So count your blessings, my friend, and be thankful that you can gripe a little, or at least not be worried over your griping. Tomorrow may be a better day. Ducks don't always fly and fish don't always seem to bite and those rascally "birds" won't always fly into the woods. Rabbits may be scarce in this briar patch, but over yonder at the next farm where Farmer Jones has left some feed patches and turnips, you can still find them in sizable numbers. And deer! They're plentiful. Too plentiful in some places and they can stand thinning down. The gunning for Canadas and canvasbacks may not be what you like, but they're still around and if you're lucky to have a blind or get invited to one, you may get a shot or two. Turkeys! They too can be seen, not in the numbers of the early colonial days but still in sizable flocks now and then to make your heart flutter.

Be thankful that you can still hunt, still enjoy the privilege which is so richly, distinctly American. Be thankful it is November with all its color, peace, splendor and sumptuous bounty; be thankful for all the blessings of a well-fed, liberty-loving free nation.

There are still people in the world who are hungry. There are still people in the world to whom a gun means something other than a sporting weapon. There are still people in the world who cower in fear and are afraid to openly say, thank you, Lord. — J. J. S.

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"There is ample evidence that a reasonably natural world is the only sanitary environment for a human being or any other animal. The nobility of man will be a vain and farcical idea if the earth is to be parceled out until every individual is competing with his equals for a meager share of pure air, clear water, green grass, and cool woodland. When we come to live by bread alone, we will have lost the something that makes us more than creatures.

"What this country is like even fifty years from now will be decided by how successful we are in attaining a measure of social self-control. Americans don't like control. That's how they got here in the first place. But recently there are so many of them they are having to divide things; and that, too, was long beneath their dignity. Now they are discovering that there is a point where independence becomes irresponsibility and liberty becomes license. Even freedom of the personal kind must be abridged somewhat in order that others can enjoy it in equal measure."

—DURWARD L. ALLEN





Yes, they're ghost ducks and they'll be plaguing you again come November 12.

## The GHOST DUCKS are coming again

By PHILIP BARSKE

I'M NOT a bagged duck, roast duck, broiled duck, pressed duck or a stuffed duck — no, I'm one of those "ghost ducks" that hover over every shooter and help make the annual waterfowl loss some 25 percent greater than it should be. In other words, I am a dead duck that does no one any good! Let's take a roll call of ducks that come in for their harps and see what's up.

It is generally estimated from bag checks and hunter kill surveys that we ducks suffer a cripple loss over the nation of from 20 to 25 percent of all ducks bagged. From a total estimated bag of close to twenty million ducks in the United States, we can figure that we lose another five million feather members as cripples. Most of us who get just enough lead to knock us down do not

end up in a duckatorium for a rest cure. No sir, we end up as dead ducks.

Checking the boys that come thru the pearly gates I've learned a few things that could take the curl out of my tail. Myself, I am a deputy of St. Anas (Duck kind of St. Peter), and I got my job by stopping a load of number nine shot as I left a little woods pond in a hurry. Sure enough, that's what happened! I'd already reached the height of my jump and was beginning to head for other parts, when, whango, I got a stinging crackling in my wing and a plop, down I went end over teakettle into the cattails. "I got him," I heard a voice yell, "but darn it, he's in the water and I guess I can't get it!"

He didn't want me and I didn't want him — but there I was — a busted wing and an aching head that wouldn't let me think straight. No rescue service, no hospitalization, no old age infirmity insurance to look forward to. Rest is what I needed and although I should have known better I just let myself go and went into a deep and exhausted sleep. Little did I know that as I lay there, an old snapping turtle was eyeing me for my St. Anas deputy uniform.

My obituary record ends, "Wounded in flight, left to die. Finally dispatched by being dragged below water and ripped to pieces by the jaws of old mossback."

If ducks could talk as our departed friends and tell the whole story, I believe each duck hunter would give more thought to the part he contributes to unwarranted loss of millions of waterfowl.

The annual loss of crippled or unreturned birds is a serious problem and one that is cutting drastically into the breeding stock and into the harvestable crop. It's poor business and a symptom of poor sportsmanship when we allow one-fourth of the total annual waterfowl kill to go down a rathole.

The total figures for waterfowl cripple loss are not just picked out of the air. Originally, cripple losses were guesses, but recent studies by a number of state departments have come up with a set of reliable figures that range from annual cripple loss of 8 to 53 percent and in the overall picture average about 25 percent nationwide.

Again these figures, picked from state and federal studies on a nation-wide basis indicate only birds knocked down within sight of the observer and not retrieved! How great the cripple loss would be if we could truly know the total mortality caused by crippled and leaded birds.

Indirectly we can set up a figure that is food for thought. Take the figure of an average nation-wide cripple loss of 25 percent, which is observable losses. How many more birds are leaded, fly off, not observed as cripples but nevertheless doomed to death, adding another unknown figure to harvestable or brood crop, we don't know. To give some figures, recent x-ray work by William Elder of Missouri and Jim Jordan of Illinois indicates the amount of lead thrown at waterfowl. In a

study of 3,638 adult dabblers, in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Elder found that one of four drake ducks was carrying body shot. Jordan, in Illinois, on a study of some 1700 birds, found that adult ducks showed an incidence of 35 percent of body shot, whereas juvenile birds indicated a level of 14.5 percent carrying one or more shot pellets. In other words, we have a staggering number of waterfowl that have been mighty close to death's door.

What is the cause of crippling losses?; how can they be reduced?; who is interested in reducing this loss? There are three questions, simple in nature but involving a mighty tough factor to work with. The one real controlling element is the "human being."

Cripple loss stems from three basic elements, the human, the gun, and the target. If there were perfect understanding and coordination between gun and man, the loss of cripples would be within reason. Where reason would lie is debatable, but it certainly shouldn't be 25 percent.

Few of us go through the season without having cause for self reproach over the number of crippled and dead birds that are not recovered. Even if we are utterly indifferent to the humane aspect of the matter, we cannot ignore the fact that it is idiotic to allow at least one-fourth of the total annual kill of waterfowl to be wasted in such fashion! Maybe a rundown of some of the causes of crippling will strike a chord of self reproach in us and when the same situation arises next fall, possibly we will check ourselves in time to become a statistics reducer and a duck saver.



Failure to retrieve birds adds to the growing list of ghost ducks. Partial solution: use dog retrievers.





A crippled or downed bird should be retrieved at all cost. Many hunters lose dead birds by allowing the wind or tide to take them away. Solution is to get to your birds right away.

1. *Trigger happy shooting.* Oh boy! we've got them in every phase of the business. This situation is your baby. Think it over.

2. *Inability to judge distance.* This is probably the single greatest cause of avoidable loss. The hunter who shoots at all out-of-range birds and occasionally bags one is not demonstrating skill, but rather ignorance of the proper use of his fowling piece and letting the other fellow practice conservation.

3. *Poor marksmanship.* This hits many of us where it hurts! For ten months, old betsy sits a'mouldering in the cabinet or in the damp gun case, and when the legal hour of the opening day comes we proceed to do our practicing on live birds. One federal official who has observed gunners in the field for many years, said that many of the cripples of the first few days are caused by "good" gunners, but "good" gunners who haven't shot since last season.

4. *Ability to judge properly the range of modern shells.* Here is a matter that can become a real issue. Our modern shells are hard hitting but they are not sky hooks, nor does the man who purchases a box of long-range shells automatically acquire the skill that is needed for pointing the gun for this type of shooting. The proper range and a basic knowledge of the killing power of the shooting equipment is still basic. "Shooting at birds that are out-of-range is undoubtedly the greatest single cause of avoidable loss. Why is this done? Probably because the hunter cannot readily judge distance. If that is the case, he should pace off 30 yards (consistent killing range) 50 yards (near maximum consistent killing range) and 70 yards (out of consistent killing range). Just as a man becomes intimately familiar with his auto and the maximum speed it will endure, so he must recognize that his gun also operates within limits."

5. *Failure to retrieve birds.* The failure to retrieve birds is a wide-open case and ranges from the lack of a retrieving dog to just downright piggishness. There are cases, too, where birds are shot just for target practice or where a fellow is too lazy to exert himself to pick up a downed bird. Many shooters do not own or use dogs and must rely upon their own resources to retrieve.

Failure to retrieve birds can't be passed over until a

few words are written about the eatin' duck shooter. How many of our smaller and sometimes considered "inferior" ducks are knocked down before the legal limit is obtained? No one writing about ducks, sportsmanship or laws can change an attitude or an individual's level of sportsmanship. Each man has to decide whether, in the pursuit of sport, he is justified in shooting down ducks that will be lost and wasted. A real sportsman waits until his bird is well in range. If one is crippled, a quick second or third shot will help to erase the blunder of a partial hit. The extra shot carried in many duck guns should be reserved to rake a cripple the moment he is down.

6. *Type of shooting.* The various agencies interested in cutting down on the cripple wastage have come up with some facts that show the effect of different types of shooting on cripple loss. The early part of the season yields the greatest cripple loss. At this time the vegetation is dense, the hunter, both novice and experienced, is a bit rusty and the first few birds are often targets. In *pass shooting*, the highest degree of shooting ability is necessary for success. Unfortunately, this type of shooting attracts many of the inexperienced gunners and thus results in the highest cripple loss. *Decoy shooting* is generally the favorite type of shooting method and is also best suited to the average gunner. If a gunner is reasonably conscientious and backed by a dog, the cripple loss can be held quite low. In *jump shooting*, a favorite with many gunners, both by the nature of the sport and the situation encountered, cripple loss is relatively light.

7. *Period of season.* As stated previously most studies indicate the early season cripple loss to be the most severe. We can attribute this peak loss to several factors and many of us know some secret ones of our own. As the season progresses, the vegetation becomes sparser, the birds are easier to find and also, the gunners who persist are generally the dyed-in-the-wool shooters who know pretty well how to point and swing a gun.

#### HOW AND WHO SHOULD BE INTERESTED IN REDUCING CRIPPLE LOSS

From a bit of the foregoing résumé of reasons and extent of cripple loss, we can form some idea of the

(Continued on page 23)



*Hercules Powder Co., photo by Aubrey Shaw, Jr.*

Weather conditions permitting, Virginia big game hunters should bag over 17,000 deer this season.

# OUTLOOK ON DEER

By STUART P. DAVEY  
*Leader, Deer Investigations*

ONCE AGAIN comes that time of year when thoughts of the big game hunter in Virginia turn to deer. By the time you read this, however, hunts will already have taken place in the Dismal Swamp area and those who love the bow will already have had their chance in some areas.

And what are the chances of getting a deer this year, you might ask? What are the prospects for the average gunner? Well, according to deer investigations by the Commission, the prospects look eminently good.

Over the past year or so, more counties have reached the point where deer herds need increased harvesting. This can only mean more successful hunters and another record deer take for Virginia.

Last year, all records were broken when nearly 12,000 deer were reported. This year, over 17,000 are expected to be harvested.

Over 17,000! Isn't that too many deer? Isn't this too large a harvest?

No, the truth of the matter is, even this should be a conservative harvest. We now have 81 out of 98 counties open to deer hunting. In 58 of these only antlered bucks will be legal game, thus permitting the deer to increase annually as fast as possible. In 23 counties, antlerless deer will be legal under one type of season or another — seasons designed to fully harvest the herds and to hold their numbers in check. Such is necessary to hold down their interference with forest food supplies, crops, and their own well-being.

But before you go bounding into the woods, gun in hand, be sure you check your game law digest. Be sure you know what legal ground you stand on.

Just how *do* the seasons stack up? Out in the Glades area of Wise and Scott counties, antlerless deer will be taken by permit only; this being due to the isolated situation. In the northern valley counties of Augusta, Bath, Highland, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Frederick, Warren and Page, antlered bucks will be legal game all



week and antlerless deer will be legal on Saturday, the last day. All other counties with an open season west of the Blue Ridge will have to abide by the "buck law" for six open days.

East of the Blue Ridge, some complications are met in the interpretation of the seasons, but then there is a longer season (usually 45 days). Generally speaking, Piedmont counties have a buck law — Halifax being an exception. In counties like Powhatan, Amelia, Chesterfield and Dinwiddie, two bucks may be taken during the season.

In the Tidewater counties there is a terrific potential in a deer harvest but it will be but gently scratched this year. Better not shoot anything but one buck in the Northern Neck counties. From south of the York River to the border, however, the law says two bucks is the limit. In parts of Prince George, Sussex and Southampton, antlerless deer will be legal the last 15 days, while in James City and only in part of Charles City, the doe and fawn will be legal only on the last day.

This summary covers most areas except the counties of Caroline, Essex, King and Queen, King William and Warwick (city) where two deer to the season, one of which may be a doe, is the case. Now you see why you were asked to check your game law digest.

You are probably wondering from where all these expected 17,000 plus deer are to come. Space won't permit a complete listing but here are totals for the leading counties as based on the past seven seasons' reports received and the assumption that decent hunting weather will be the rule in the short season west of the Blue Ridge. The largest county totals will come from west of the Blue Ridge, with Shenandoah County leading

with an expected total of 1800 deer (900 antlered, 900 antlerless). And, unless Mother Nature calls a halt, this figure may have to be increased to around 2500 annually to check the herd. Other big western counties will be Augusta with about 1425, Bath with 1150 to 1400 (depending upon attitudes toward doe shooting), Rockingham with 850 and Frederick with 840. It is also expected that Warren, Page and Highland will hit around 350 each.

Several southwestern counties like Giles with 290, Craig with 350 and Smyth with 380 are going to develop into "1000-deer" counties within two years if the present trend continues.

Most of the Piedmont herds are just nicely started; exceptions being Buckingham with 250, Halifax with 200 and Chesterfield with 130.

Leaders in the Tidewater counties should be Caroline with 750, Charles City with perhaps 650, Southampton and Prince George with 500 each, Sussex with 480 and Norfolk and James City with about 400 each.

With luck and good deer management, there's no reason why Virginia sportsmen shouldn't harvest 30,000 deer annually by 1956. We are literally living, game-wise, in the era of deer.

#### SUMMARY OF PREDICTIONS 1954 DEER SEASON

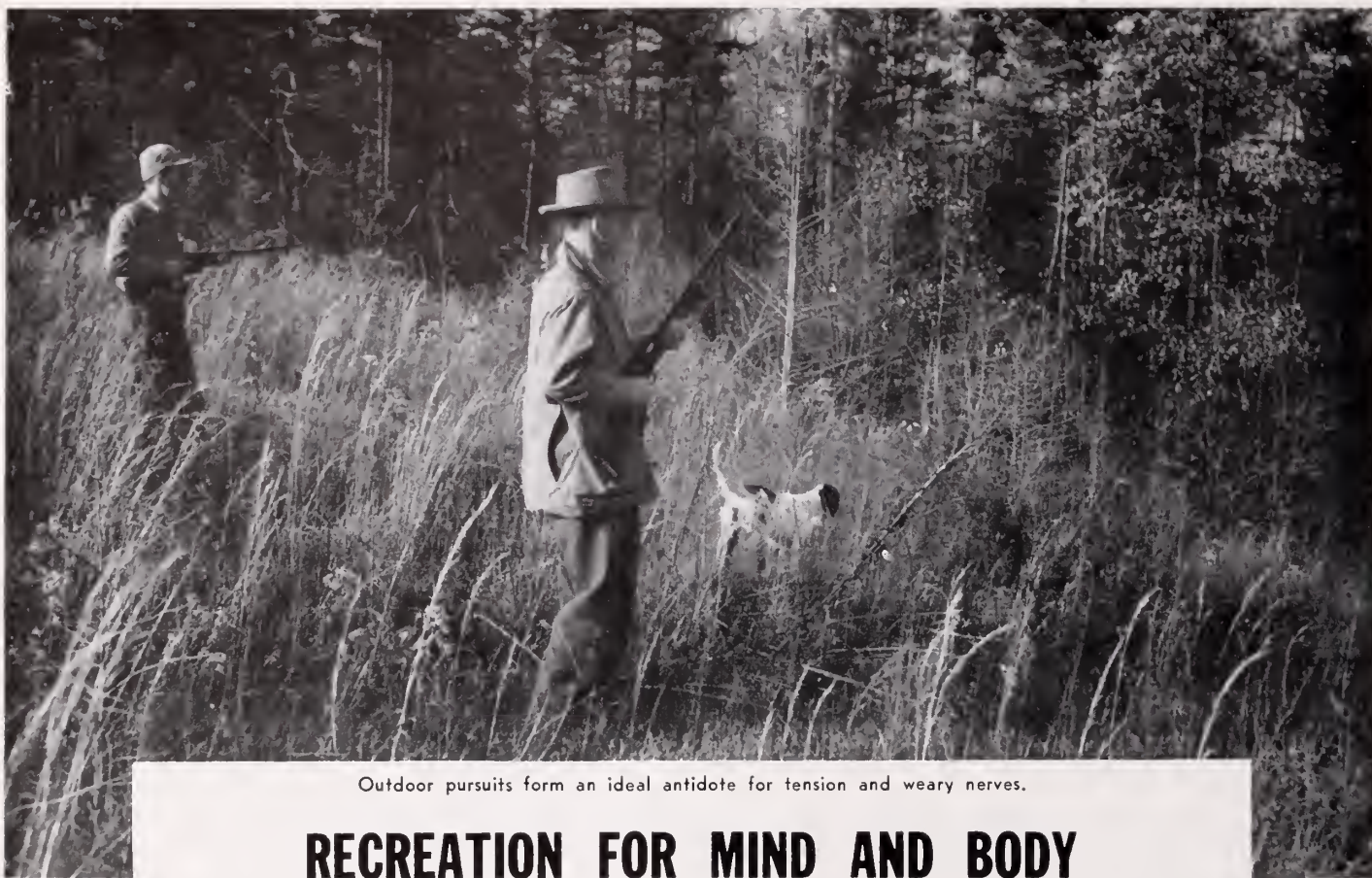
	Antlered Bucks	Antlerless	Total
West of Blue Ridge	6,400	3,245	9,645
Piedmont	1,630	100	1,730
Tidewater	4,455	1,770	6,225
	<u>12,485</u>	<u>5,115</u>	<u>17,600</u>



#### Reflection

"I have watched the face of many a newly wolfless mountain, and seen the south-facing slopes wrinkle with a maze of new deer trails. I have seen every edible bush and seedling browsed, first to anaemic desuetude, and then to death. I have seen every edible tree defoliated to the height of a saddlehorn. Such a mountain looks as if someone had given God a new pruning shears, and forbidden Him all other exercise. In the end the starved bones of the hoped-for deer herd, dead of its own too-much, bleach with the bones of the dead sage, or molder under the high-lined junipers.

"I now suspect that just as a deer herd lives in mortal fear of its wolves, so does a mountain live in mortal fear of its deer. And perhaps with better cause, for while a buck pulled down by wolves can be replaced in two or three years, a range pulled down by too many deer may fail of replacement in as many decades."—Aldo Leopold



Outdoor pursuits form an ideal antidote for tension and weary nerves.

## RECREATION FOR MIND AND BODY

By I. T. QUINN  
*Executive Director*

LOTS of figures have been completed showing the values in dollars and cents of the recreations of hunting and fishing to the state. Yet there are few who would concede that these are commensurate in importance to the intangible benefits accruing to the people from these outdoor recreations.

For example, it has been conservatively estimated that the hunters and anglers are spending \$100,000,000 annually in pursuit of their sports in Virginia, this money going into the pockets of a great many different persons. It has been shown also that availability of good hunting and fishing adds materially to the value of property. But still these very definite material values are secondary in importance.

In terms of health, it is impossible to form an idea how greatly the citizens of the Old Dominion are benefitted by virtue of their love of hunting and fishing and their ability to indulge in these pastimes. Even this may not be quite as important as the mental relaxation which these recreations afford.

In the complex civilization in which the people are now living, it is a matter of necessity that means be at hand whereby men can find relief from the tensions of everyday life. The lists of suicides and of commitments to mental institutions would be far longer if it were not for the relaxing recreations of hunting and fishing.

Down through the years a very considerable portion of all Virginia's people have had the privilege of engaging in hunting and fishing, and there is no means of estimating to what extent the moral and physical fibre of the citizens has been toughened as a result, nor can it be calculated to what extent self-reliance has been fostered among young and old alike.

When a man goes afield with his gun, or goes out on the fishing waters with his tackle, he is on his own and must depend upon his own devices. In either case, his environment is utterly different from what he is accustomed to in his daily routine. Of necessity, he becomes oblivious to every care in the world. If he were not, he would not be hunting and fishing.

Aside from the surroundings which cause a man's blood to tingle, there is every need for alertness, whether hunting or angling, and there is no opportunity to brood over everyday cares. Hunters and anglers have the happy faculty of forgetting all else but the sport they are pursuing. It is this that is perhaps even more important than the keen appetites created, the zest for living, and the dreamless sleep that is induced.

Hunting and fishing furnish the ideal antidote for the kinds of tensions which unsettle men's reason, and these everyday tensions are becoming more acute problems all the time. Those who are engaging in business and in



the professions are finding that the drains upon their nervous energies are becoming more and more serious.

The problems of finding mental relaxation are serious enough among adults; among the youngsters it is imperative that they have wholesome pursuits to occupy their active minds and offset other and less healthful influences to which they are constantly subjected. The following words of Judge William G. Long, of the Superior Court of Seattle, Washington, are significant:

"I have been Juvenile Court Judge in King County, Washington, for over 20 years, and during that time I have handled some forty-five thousand juvenile cases. As a result of that experience I have come to the conclusion that most youngsters go wrong simply because they do not have anything else to do. City kids do not have the chores to do that most of us had when we were growing up. It is more difficult for them to get out into the hills and on the waters and in the mountains. Paved streets and alleys are not very wholesome places in which youngsters can give vent to their abundant energies and their hunger for adventure. Many of them turn to stealing cars and burglary for their outlets.

"It has also been my observation, however, that these same kids respond naturally when given an opportunity to hike and fish and climb, and I cannot recall a single case, in twenty years, of serious juvenile conduct involving a youngster whose hobby and recreation outlet was fishing."



Fishing is one pastime that clears the mind, banishes worry, and puts refreshed life into tired bodies.

The Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries is fully aware of its responsibility in safeguarding the recreations which mean so much to all elements of people. Opportunities to hunt and to fish must be at all costs perpetuated. Not only must they be perpetuated but the wildlife resources upon which they depend must be definitely expanded to take care of the increased need for these recreations as population grows.

The mental health and the moral and physical fibre of all the people are involved. Enigmatical as it may seem, the very fact that hunting and fishing play so important a part in our way of life in Virginia is a challenge, rather than a discouragement. There is no pessimism in the approach to present efforts to provide more and better hunting and fishing as the years go by.

The fact that the need for these wholesome recreations is becoming more and more generally recognized is a guaranty that the wildlife resources will never be neglected in the future. The authorities are convinced that the full potentials of Virginia's game and fish supplies have in no sense been reached. Present aggressive measures are not aimed at simply keeping the resources at existing levels, but bringing about definite and substantial gains in abundance.

The impact of the outdoor recreations upon the mental well-being of the people is becoming widely recognized and furnishes added reasons for increasingly intensive conservation efforts.

\* Reprinted courtesy *Mental Health in Virginia*.

## Migratory Game Bird Regulations in Virginia 1954-55

### WATERFOWL (DUCKS, GEESE, BRANT, COOTS)

**Season:** Ducks, Geese, Coot—November 12-January 10  
Brant—December 13-January 10

**Hours:** From one-half hour before sunrise until sunset, except on the opening day shooting shall not begin until 12 o'clock noon; except at Back Bay no hunter shall be permitted to leave shore before one-half hour before sunrise and shall not be allowed to fire his gun before sunrise, and shall not shoot later than 4 P.M.

**Bag Limit:** Ducks, 4 a day (1 of which may be a wood duck), 8 in possession after first day (2 of which may be wood ducks).

Geese, 2 Canada geese a day, 4 in possession after first day.

Coot, 10 a day, 10 in possession.

Brant, 6 a day, 6 in possession.

### RAILS AND GALLINULES

Clapper Rail and Gallinules:

**Season:** September 11-November 19

**Bag Limit:** 15 a day in the aggregate of rails and gallinules, 30 in possession.

**Hours:** One-half hour before sunrise to sunset each day.

Sora:

**Season:** September 11-November 19

**Bag Limit:** 25 a day, 25 in possession.

**Hours:** One-half hour before sunrise to sunset each day.

### DOVES

**Season:** September 11-September 30

October 16-November 4

**Bag Limit:** 8 a day, 8 in possession.

**Hours:** From 12 o'clock noon until sunset each day.

### WOODCOCK

**Season:** November 20-December 29

**Bag Limit:** 4 a day, 8 in possession after first day.

**Hours:** One-half hour before sunrise to sunset each day.

### JACKSNIP (Wilson's Snipe)

**Season:** November 20-December 4

**Bag Limit:** 8 a day, 8 in possession.

**Hours:** One-half hour before sunrise to sunset each day.

# SQUIRREL CLEANING MADE EASY

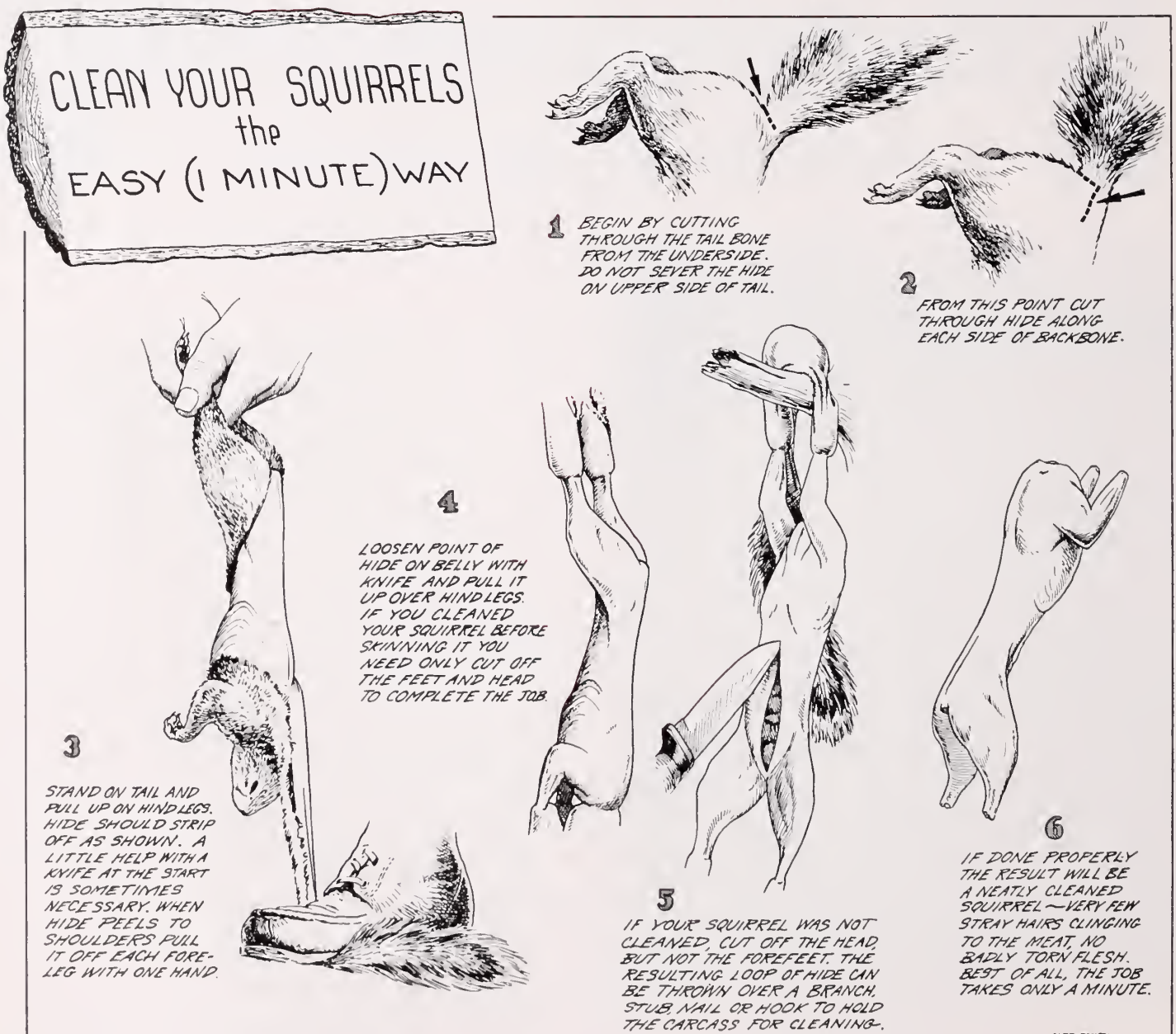
**D**RESSING squirrels can be a mean chore and take a lot of pleasure out of hunting fun. Many a successful day in the oak-hickory woods can be dampened by the mere thought of having to come home and start an unpleasant operation—or go without a nice mess of fried squirrel or a Brunswick stew. The neighbors will always welcome your bushytails, but they, too, may balk at the thought of undressing br'er squirrel.

Some hunters try to make the job easier by cleaning squirrels in the field during a lull in the hunting, which is wise indeed. Others just put off the thought until they come home, hopeful that Mother will be so elated over the sight of wild game she will volunteer the cleaning operation—or maybe Junior can be persuaded to

do the job at a nickel a head. Chances are though, you'll be stuck with the task yourself.

The task of squirrel skinning need not be a tough surgical performance. With the right technique, the hide can be removed—clean—in about one minute. The accompanying six sketches will reveal the secrets of a fast, clean, almost effortless method of removing the skin and cleaning the carcass. Follow the steps one by one carefully and see if this method doesn't banish your squirrel cleaning worries forever. Remember, the big secret is in making that first cut as shown in Figure 1. **DO NOT** cut through the skin on the upper side of the tail bone, but cut through on the underside of the squirrel's tail.

Performed properly, dressing squirrels can be an easy chore in the field or at home.





## VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

# CONSERVATIONGRAM

Commission Activities and Late Wildlife News . . . At A Glance

COMMISSION EXHIBIT AT STATE FAIR DRAWS BIG CROWDS. The Game Commission's outdoor scene, with its waterfall, moss-encircled trout pool, live quail and a fawn, and a trapper's cabin with guns, powder horns and trophies, drew continuous crowds during the Atlantic Rural Exposition, Sept. 24-Oct. 2. Commission publications were distributed and countless questions answered on conservation, hunting and fishing in Virginia by special services officers, game wardens and education division personnel in attendance. The display was awarded second place among state exhibits at the fair.

WARDENS COMPLETE GUN SAFETY COURSE. Webb Midyette, chief of the Law Enforcement Division of the Game Commission has been advised by John W. Courtney, Jr., president and instructor of the Virginia State Rifle and Revolver Association, affiliated with the National Rifle Association, that a total of 128 certificates has been issued to wardens who attended the Game Warden School at Blacksburg, stating that they had successfully completed the course in gun safety and had demonstrated a knowledge of safe hunting practices.

C. I. VAN CLEVE NEW IWLA PRESIDENT. C. I. Van Cleve, of the Lynchburg Chapter, was elected president of the Virginia Division of the Izaak Walton League of America, succeeding Paul O. Peters, of Arlington, at the state convention held at the Hotel Jefferson in Richmond October 2-3. The meeting had a 30-foot panel exhibit, featuring Commission activities, on display at the convention and Executive Director I. T. Quinn gave a talk on "Virginia's Game and Inland Fish Resources—Present and Future."

PUBLIC FISHING POND PROGRAM PROGRESSING. G. W. Buller, chief of the Fish Division of the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries, reports that the public fishing pond in Brunswick county is nearing completion and being filled up. Around 2500 largemouth bass already have been planted and additional fish will be added as the lake continues to fill. Stocking of largemouth will begin in the Clay Brittle Fishing Pond in Fauquier County at an early date, but there will be no fishing until June 1955 in order to allow sufficient time for breeding. Projects in Chesterfield and Fluvanna counties are being held up due to conditions over which the Commission has no control, but the Commission hopes to begin work on fish ponds in those counties at an early date.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION CONVENTION. The Virginia Wildlife Federation held its annual convention at Narrows on October 9 and 10. J. J. Shomon, chief of the Education Division of the Game Commission and editor of Virginia Wildlife, was one of the speakers at the meeting.

NATURAL RESOURCE CONSERVATION WEEK OBSERVED. Governor Stanley set aside the week of October 17 through 25 as Natural Resource Conservation Week and all land-use agencies in the state cooperated in its observance. The Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries took an active part since, with its programs of habitat improvement for upland game and game fish, it has a vital stake in proper use of the land. Under the long-range wildlife program adopted for Virginia six years ago many tons of seeds and slips of desirable plants for game have been furnished free to landowners in order that they might establish them on areas designated by Soil Conservation technicians. Game Commission personnel have helped with the actual planting.



Forest fires are the great bane of all that is good and worthwhile in the woods.

# SPORTSMEN-

DON'T ENDANGER YOUR  
BEING CARELESS IN THE

**DON'T BE CARELESS** New legislative act can close woods to

*U. S. Forest Service and F*

When forest fires burn, everybody loses. Hunters, be extremely careful with smokes and campfires this season, for if too many fires occur, there will be no hunting.



Cigarette flipping is the most common of all misdemeanors.



The careless emptying of pipe ashes in the woods surely invites disaster.



A warming fire on a dry forest floor may result in a holocaust.



Unattended campfire has habit of making away.





Don't put Smokey Bear to work like this. This tamed bear has been trained to put out forest fires.

## HUNTING SPORT BY FIELDS AND FORESTS

I hunting if serious fire hazard occurs. **DO BE CAREFUL**

*Game Commission photos*



To make sure your match is dead out, break it in two.



To make sure your cigarette is dead out, crush it in damp earth.



To make sure your campfire is dead out, douse it thoroughly with water.



# FEWER HUNTING ACCIDENTS

By MAX CARPENTER  
*Special Services Officer*

**O**R better yet, not a single hunting accident in Virginia for 1954! Would this be too much to expect or a goal too high to try to achieve?

Will you live through this year's gunning season without being wounded—maybe *killed*? It is a question we well may ask ourselves. An increase in the number of hunters going afield each year (over 500,000 hunting licenses probably will be sold this year) need not mean an increase in the number of hunting accidents, yet the trend, at least in Virginia, points that way.

We thought some progress was being made in the Hunter-Safety Program in Virginia when the hunting accidents in the 1952-53 season dropped to 3 killed and 9 wounded. So it is disappointing to read reports for the 1953-54 season which show the highest number of accidents ever to happen in this state. Last year, 32 people were hurt while hunting and 9 received wounds that were fatal.

Naturally you wonder how these accidents happened. Some may have been unavoidable, but about half of them could have been prevented. The same old reasons

are at the top of the list as the causes of these accidents, with little variation, from year to year. Eight accidents (one-quarter of the total) happened because the hunter shot at some moving object he *thought* was game. Eight more happened because of such careless practices as carrying a loaded gun in a car, carrying the gun in a slipshod manner, and leaning a cocked gun against a tree or car. Two simple ways to cut in half the shooting accidents in our state is, therefore, to carry that loaded gun with "kid gloves" on and never shoot at sound or movement—it may be another man.

The material for this article was taken from accident reports sent in by county game wardens and conservation officers since 1948. These records not only help your Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries to know where to stress and preach safety, and advise on firearm legislation, but they also are turned over to national organizations such as the National Rifle Association and to state organizations such as the Virginia State Rifle and Revolver Association to help in their Hunter-Safety Program.

TABLE 1 — SUMMARIZED HUNTING ACCIDENT REPORT  
PERIOD — 1948-1954

Year	Total No. Accidents	No. Counties Involved	Shotgun	High Power Rifle	Small Rifle	Fatal	Non-Fatal	Inflicted by		Under 20 yrs.	Over 20 yrs.
								Self	Other		
1948-49	3	3	2	0	1	1	2		3	2	1
1949-50	16	15	14	0	2	8	7	7	8	6	8
1950-51	19	15	16	1	2	9	10	7	14	7	10
1951-52	27	21	22	4	1	11	16	11	16	11	15
1952-53	12	9	10	1	1	3	9	7	5	7	4
1953-54	32	26	23	4	4	9	22	12	20	13	17
Totals	109		87	10	11	41	66	41	66	46	55

While admiring your gun with a companion, don't let the youngsters do the same.



A good way to lose a toe. How often have you seen hunters do exactly this?







Don't put firearms in a dangerous position. Dogs have a habit of getting excited and enthusiastic.



Good quail cover but poor hunting technique. Never hunt so as to place yourself or companion in danger.

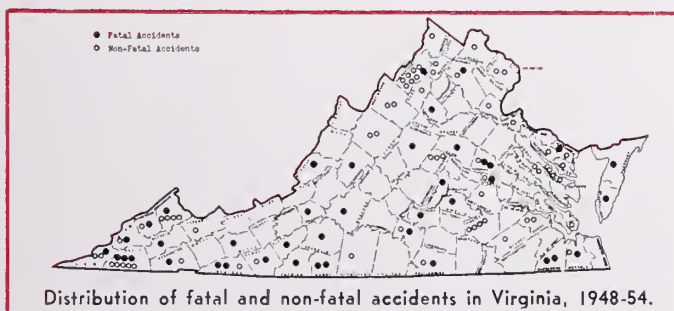


Bad again! Always carry your gun in a safe position and in such a manner that if you fall or stumble no one can be injured.



This man is acting, but he could be dead. Moral: don't crawl through fences with gun in hand—rather, push gun through first.

For this six-year period, 1948-51, it is interesting to note on the map (Figure 1) whether or not your county has had a shooting accident. There is no obvious reason why some counties have had six or eight accidents while others have had none. For example, Shenandoah County has had eight accidents (one fatal, seven non-fatal) and Scott County has had three fatal and five non-fatal, while Bath, Highland, Bland, Giles and others have had none. It is true that Shenandoah County had the highest deer kill of the counties mentioned, but the number was only a few more than for Augusta or Bath. Apparently, it is less a question of the amount of game killed in a county than of the character and experience of the man with the gun.



The increase in shooting accidents each year brings increased pressure on the State Legislature to outlaw the high-powered rifle as a hunting weapon. The argument

is that the rifle bullet carries too far to make it a safe firearm. The figures shown in Tables 1 and 2 show that for every accident with a rifle, there were 8 with a shotgun, that the great majority happen within 1 to 10 yards, but that even up to 100 yards, twice as many accidents happened with the shotgun as with the rifle. Last year only one out of the nine fatal accidents was caused by a rifle and that was by a .22. Before outlawing the high-powered rifle in your county, be sure it is the weapon which is to blame for your hunting accidents!

TABLE 2—NUMBER OF ACCIDENTS AND DISTANCE BETWEEN VICTIM AND SHOOTER — COMPARING SHOTGUN WITH HIGH-POWERED RIFLE — 1948-1954

Distance in Yds.	Number of Accidents	
	Shotgun	High-Powered Rifle
1 or less	34	1
2 to 10	13	2
10 to 20	2	0
20 to 30	8	1
30 to 40	3	0
40 to 50	6	1
50 to 100	6	3
100 to 200	1	0
200 to 300	0	1
Total	73	9

(Continued on page 21)



# Quail Shooter's Choice

The time has come in our bird hunting  
when we must de-emphasize the bag

By GORDON MOORE, JR.

**W**HENEVER "bird hunters" gather together, pet theories on the decline of bobwhite are expounded. Such theories invariably include good roads, machine farming, stray dogs and cats, hawks, skunks, foxes, and bad hatching seasons. All of these are factors, but seldom is the gun ranked in its proper place as the number one destroyer of our most beloved game bird.

It is nothing short of a miracle that the birds have survived the combination of circumstances that affect their existence, but it is probable that our Virginia quail have pretty well stabilized themselves in numbers as far as the foreseeable future is concerned. Yet hunters are on the increase and among them are more capable shots than ever before. The armed services trained thousands. To offset this the birds have become smart. In fact there are two kinds of quail now—smart ones or dead ones. When Frank Forester, the dean of American sporting authors, wrote on the bobwhite in 1848 they were pretty smart and used many of the same tricks you now hear described as brand new. The main differences a hundred years later are that birds are much scarcer now and lespedeza and machine farming have enabled and forced the game into the woods.

All of this means we gunners must change our thinking and de-emphasize the bag. How often do we take the state bag limit anyway? And from strictly an economical standpoint it will be hard for a city dweller to justify the expense of the whole thing UNLESS one diversifies his interest and energy into some related field.

Here are some thoughts along this line. First comes the field trial clubs. They make natural outlets for the quail hunter's energy, afford great sport within themselves, and constitute sound conservation measures. Too many beginners become discouraged by the rough and tumble competition generated by the average trial. I would suggest that more of our clubs run shooting dog stakes and that such stakes be closed to any dog that had, within the past year, placed in any open competition. Who wants to put down a fair bird dog with some jet-propelled steamroller that has just the week before won an open stake? Dogs are not amateurs or professionals—just the handlers are.

Photography is another natural. It is much more difficult to get a really good picture of your dogs on point than it is to make a double on a covey rise. The devel-

opments in new photographic equipment, both still and movie, issue a challenge that could easily split your hobby two for one and pay swell dividends. We all can't be Edgar Queenys but we can get results good enough to afford pleasure for years to come.

Clay target shooting offers one of our most democratic sports and a great chance "to let off steam." The famous Bobwhite Lodge in Campbell County has found that their walk-up shoot holds the interest of its members and affords much pleasure throughout the year. Two regulation skeet traps are placed in a pit and five walkways forming a semi-circle lead to it. The shooter leaves the post with gun in field position and the puller, by use of manual control, lets go anytime he wants to. Both singles and doubles are shot and every effort is made to simulate real field shooting. There's no closed season on skeet, walk-up, straight traps, or the more informal hand trap.

I have two friends who realized early the futility of merely counting the sport by the birds killed. They started sporting libraries to help hold their interest. Now they have not only the best current books on shooting but many of the rare early American editions as well. A private library of sporting titles makes a thing of beauty and value.



Field trials provide natural outlets for quail hunters' energy, are sporting themselves, and promote conservation.





Skeet and trap are natural pastimes to "let off steam." They improve your shooting eye and lessen cripples.

Predator control for the rural dweller and taxidermy for the city fellows make perfect related activities. It doesn't matter too much what you use as a buffer. I write a magazine article every now and then to keep my interest to the proper level.

One should, by all means, join an organization such as the Izaak Walton League. The 4-H clubs offer splendid programs for the youngsters. Get to know the game warden in your district. The traffic cop who works a crossing near my home is a great favorite with every kid in the neighborhood. His influence on them is of real consequence. Let's encourage such a relationship between young nimrods and game wardens. All of us, too, can lend a hand on feeding wildlife during prolonged periods of ice and snow.

Homes spring up along our highways as if by magic. With them go pets. Recently below Rustburg, in bird country, I saw eight hunting house cats in as many miles. Be sure to look to your own dogs and cats before you criticize your neighbor for allowing his to stray. The damage they do in the nesting season is only second to that done by the guns in the fall. It is a composite of such simple and practical conservation methods that means the difference between success and failure now days.



Photography, both still and movie, affords a big outlet for recreation. No killing here.

Once in the field try to kill cleanly or not at all. Unless you are one in a thousand, don't use anything smaller than a twenty bore gun. Stick strictly to known killing ranges and be suspicious of any sawed-off gun that may throw ineffective patterns. Learn to mark downed birds accurately; for an escaped cripple is the most wasteful thing of all. And lay off that easy-to-find covey. In a known territory there is always an easiest to find covey that soon gets cut down. If you control the land and other parties use it, stake a red flag or some agreed-upon signal in that bird field. No covey should be reduced below six birds.

It is fully realized that the ultimate for this great sport is a clean kill in the field. Nothing can alter this. A certain amount of successful gunning is necessary to train and to keep dogs in proper form. The serving of quail as a delectable dish, too, is one of the traditions of the sport. But there's got to be more to it than just the killing or things will surely go from bad to worse. What is your choice?

*Gordon Moore, Jr., of Lynchburg, Virginia, whose first love is quail shooting, has contributed articles to such publications as Field & Stream, Outdoor Life, and The Shooters Bible. In 1942 he entered the Navy and was assigned to the aerial gunnery program. After serving two years in aircrewman training, he was made staff gunnery officer of the Naval Air Technical Training Command. He is a member of the Outdoor Writers Association of America.*

## The Forest Fire

By ROBERT H. GILES, JR.

Fifty firemen, aching to the bone,  
Tired men, beat men, too weak to groan.  
Watering eyes, all red like fire,  
Strained to see through smoke and mire.

Faces covered with black and sweat,  
Clothes smelly and dirty and almost wet;  
Lungs that were hot and full of smoke  
Caused men to gasp, and cough, and choke.

Clutching hands that refused to grasp,  
A voice, once strong, now weak to a rasp.  
Responded not to will or mind  
When away roared a wind of an awful kind.

Acres and acres burned before their eyes  
And strong men even, heard woods children's cries.  
Billows of smoke—yellow, red, and white,  
Silhouetted the woods and made eerie the night.

Surges of passion struck these men of might  
At the sights they saw on that desolate night.  
Great trees, now black, among dim glowing ember  
Statuesque they stand for man to remember.

# Canoeing in the Washington Area

By LLOYD W. SWIFT  
*Chief, Division of Wildlife Management*  
U. S. Forest Service

**M**Y FAMILY can always agree on one point, we all like the outdoors. I work in Washington and reside in nearby Arlington, all urban in character. However, I rebel at the idea of living in the country just to recover each night from the hazards of several hours of commuting. A canoe solved much of our problem. We still live in the city; but we also see much of the outdoors, and under pleasant and usually exclusive conditions.

A canoe is a friendly piece of property: graceful in design; and light enough to put where you want it. Ours is a 15-foot aluminum. One person can pick it up and place it on the racks atop a car. It's also tough enough to withstand rough use, including an occasional collision with a snag or boulder. Of course, a canoe must be handled with respect. It is a safe craft under normal conditions—but should not be used carelessly, nor by inexperienced persons in hazardous waters.

Our greatest difficulty has been that everyone wants to go canoeing. While this is fine family spirit, it would crowd a 15-foot canoe. Perhaps we should have two canoes for our family of four—but that would call for another car. Another issue is that no one ever offers to drive ahead and meet the water-borne party at some downstream point. However, these things are easily settled in a family—Father does what the others desire.

Of course it takes some effort to propel a canoe. This can be a most arduous task if the plan is to head upstream in fast water, or oppose the tide with the wind against one. But there are ways to avoid such hard work. For example, it's much easier and far more pleasant to travel downstream.

No matter what our purpose may be for going canoeing, other interests develop, and sometimes even take over. Many times we have started on a fishing expedition, and found the area so interesting the hours were devoted to exploring. Conversely, we have gone out to check-run a new bit of water, but spent the day fishing.

The most satisfying thing about canoeing is the ease with which one can find a quiet and attractive retreat. Normally all that is needed is to get in line on some crowded highway, work your way to a bridge over some large stream, plunk your canoe in the water and slip away from the swish of the traffic. If you are in one of the delightful streams where the trees arch over the channel, then it's but a short distance until the sound of the highway rush is muffled and forgotten.

The Washington section offers a great variety of canoe-

ing water. For the beginners, there is the C&O Canal, which is always attractive and interesting. Tidewater inlets are also inviting. In addition to the possibilities of fishing, there is usually a chance to observe marsh life of some kind. It's fun to poke around the little channels for the surprise encounter with a bittern, a turtle, or a new flower. But for comfort, don't explore a marsh area on a hot day—it can be an oven.

We find the Piedmont streams the most satisfying. The streams build a flood plain, or bench, which is inundated just often enough to make this land unsuited for agriculture. As a result the stream borders are usually left in forest, and frequently support large and handsome trees that grow out and over the streambed.



*Photo by Abbie Rowe, N. P. S.*  
Paddling the C & O canal near Washington.





*U. S. Forest Service photo*

Canoeing a beautiful lake or river on a warm day is the ultimate in relaxation.

This old growth not only gives pleasant shade and vistas of beauty, it also is a gathering place for wildlife.

In summer, warblers and vireos keep up a steady intermingling of songs and calls; crows scold an owl high up in a tree; or a kingfisher dives from a perch. We have seen many gray squirrels slip into their dens, and one day we had the fun of seeing several one-third-grown raccoons playing at the opening of their tree home, some 25 feet above the ground. More than once the hum of busy bees has attracted our attention to their hive in a hollow tree. The beautiful wood duck is fairly common on wooded streams. And there is always a chance to see a turtle; in fact the streams and ponds here are rich in turtle life, including the gentle painted turtle and the not-so-gentle snapper.

Canoeing also makes one very sensitive to the health of the land. This is because the streams reflect good or bad land use practices, especially after a rain. The contrasts are by clear or muddy water, and clean or muddy gravel bars. And, of course, one cannot be interested in a stream without having an appreciation of these land and water relationships. But this is a story by itself.

By now the reader should be convinced that we derive much satisfaction from canoeing. It's truly a most restful pastime; and on a quiet evening in an attractive setting of clear water, irregular shoreline, and background of trees, restores one's faith in self and mankind. We recommend it for relaxation in a world of haste and crowds.

## FEWER HUNTING ACCIDENTS

(Continued from page 17)

Virginia cannot be proud of her record of 50% of all accidents caused by hunters under 21 years of age. A majority of states can hold their young hunters responsible for only 1/3 of the hunting accidents. This can be credited largely to thorough training and education of young gun handlers. Five states now have laws requiring a four-hour course in firearm instruction for all persons buying their first hunting license. This course was initiated by the National Rifle Association in an effort to save lives as well as maintain and promote the great sport of shooting.

Whether the day spent in the woods or fields in the future will be a pleasant experience or one that ends in disaster depends entirely on YOU the hunter. Be careful, take your time in shooting, and most important, know *what* you are shooting at. LET'S MAKE VIRGINIA A SAFE PLACE IN WHICH TO HUNT.

## Limits on Game Bird Importations

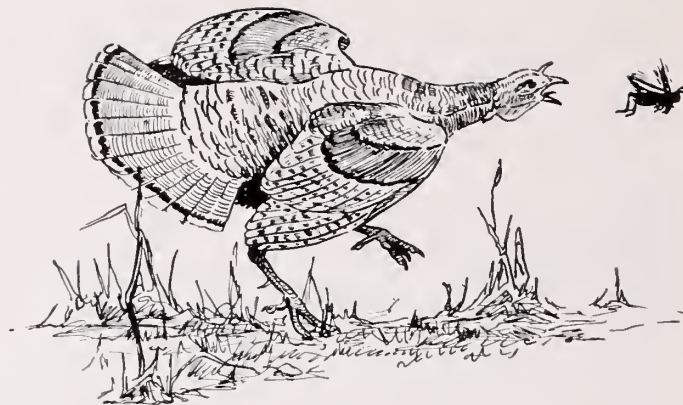
If you are planning trips to Canada or Mexico to hunt ducks, geese or other migratory game birds, check up on the requirements for bringing your birds back into the United States, warns Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay.

Migratory game birds brought or shipped from Canada, if dressed, must have the head, head plumage and feet attached and must be accompanied by tags or permits if required by Provincial or Dominion law. On the other hand, those transported from Mexico must be dressed, drawn and have the head and feet removed. A Mexican export permit is required, or an endorsement on the license by a Mexican game official granting permission to export the birds, or exhibition of the hunting license on which the official seal of the issuing office has been impressed or endorsed.

Details on bag limits and shipped regulations may be secured from the Department of Interior, Fish and Wildlife Service.

# Our great american game bird— The **WILD TURKEY**

By DOROTHY TROUBETZKOY



THE tame turkey on most Thanksgiving tables is not a domesticated form of our native North American wild turkey, but a South American bird taken to Europe by the Spanish conquistadors in the 15th century. Domesticated by the Spaniards as early as 1498, the turkey soon traveled all over western Europe and by 1575 was a principal Christmas dish on the English farmer's table. For a long time confused in the popular mind with the guinea and pea fowl which had been introduced via Constantinople, Turkey, that name attached to the South American species at home was given by early Virginians to the big bronze birds they saw in the clearings near Jamestown soon after they landed in 1607.

Wildest and largest of our upland game birds, the eastern wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo silvestris*, Vieillot) is a true native of North America. The sight of his fresh three-tined track or the sound of his clear shrill yelp far off at daybreak is enough to make any sportsman tingle with excitement.

Benjamin Franklin thought the wild turkey a far nobler bird, withal his vanity, to become our national emblem than the untidy, quarrelsome bald eagle, and unofficially the turkey seems to have won out as our most familiar and popular bird.

Though the early settlers were already familiar with the domesticated South American type of turkeys, they were impressed with the size, colors, speed and strength of these huge wild birds of the hardwood forests and with the voice of the gobblers staking their territorial claims and rounding up their harems of hens in the springtime. "He can runne as fast as a Dogge, and flye as well as a Goose" wrote William Hood of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630.

The Virginia colonists sent back tall tales of the turkeys in the forest near Jamestown. Flocks of 40 were often seen near the little settlement, wrote Strachey. Beverley claimed to have seen droves of 400 and 500 on the upper reaches of the Chesapeake. Keyed up over the hunt, estimates of turkey weights ranged as high as 70 pounds, but one of the most scientific early writers said the largest he ever saw weighed 38 pounds. Captain Smith told of broiled turkey for breakfast with Powhatan. Turkey appeared often too in the diary of Colonel William Byrd, founder of Richmond, who was in the habit of recording for posterity his daily diet.

At first the turkeys were friendly, poking inquisitively into the settlements, mixing with domestic birds in the

clearings. "The Turkeys sally by the doore, they daunce by the door" wrote Thomas Morton of "Merrymount" in Massachusetts in 1632. But they soon learned better, became "craftie like foxes" or, as Audubon put it, "wonderfully canny."

But it took more than cunning for survival. Market hunters, by means sometimes fair but often foul, bagged so many that small turkeys could be bought for a few cents at the beginning of the 19th century and a 25-30 pound turkey might sell for a quarter. The loss of their wilderness habitat was an equally serious threat to their survival. Fire, flood, predators and conversion of forest into farms all took their toll. In 1948, according to Dr. H. S. Mosby, the wild turkey had been extirpated from 19 of the original 36 states in which it had once thrived and occupied only about 12 percent of its ancestral range.

Our eastern wild turkey is a large and lordly gallinaceous bird, which nests on the ground, roosts in trees. It is garrulous and yet so alert, so remarkably keen of sight and hearing, that a sneeze or the clink of a gun barrel against a stone can spoil all the hours of patient, silent waiting in a turkey blind.

The general coloration of the male is deep glossy green, with bronze, coppery and purplish iridescence. The heads and upper necks are naked and covered with reddish or bluish fleshy caruncles. They have powerful legs and feet, are so heavy that they fly only when they have to. The male has a tuft of bristle-like feathers suspended from the breast. The female is smaller and duller and the breast feathers have a brown, fringed tip rather than the black smooth tip of the male breast feathers.

In the fall several families may band together in flocks of several dozen, but later in the fall and winter the sexes tend to segregate in groups, then break up for the mating season. The males don't breed until two years old, but the hens lay eggs the first year, 7-20 white eggs, with rusty splotches, in a well-hidden nest. The incubation period lasts 28 days.

Fall is a feasting time for turkeys as well as on them and they gorge on nuts, fruits, seeds and berries against the leaner winter. Thanks to good game management in Virginia, hunters can still go out in the woods after this largest of our upland game birds and dream of bringing home one of these big delicious birds, fattened on acorns.



part that the individual plays in either adding to or cutting down on cripple loss. There are many things an individual can do to correct this situation: number one, is to be a sportsman in the true sense of the word; back up your state and federal conservation agencies; do waterfowl work on small areas and so forth. Getting started on things a sportsman can do just seems to unfold one thought and idea after another. However, as far as the individual and cripple and dead bird losses are concerned, one of the best ways in which you and I can help is to readjust our sights and our standards of sportsmanship.

As individual gunners, our greatest responsibility and obligation is to ourselves, to make ourselves believe and feel like real sportsmen. It's a feeling we all know and one that most of us have experienced at times. In discussing ideas and philosophies, the article written by the late H. P. Sheldon in *Country Life* (1940) is cited, for it is illustrative of our present problem: "I feel that I have an extra moral privilege to speak frankly on this subject, for in the past, I, too, have fired long-range cartridges in a long-range gun at a long-range duck who had nothing to lose but his life or his splendid gift of flight. He had, perhaps, burst his shell well beyond the Arctic Circle on a night when the Northern Lights were sweeping long fingers of cold mysterious fire across the firmament. He saw that, and later he saw the length of a great continent past and beneath his wings. The Great Slave Lake, the Touissant Marsh where the slow stream of that name empties into Erie; Currituck Sound; the canebrakes, bayous and piney woods of the Deep South, and a winter on a shallow coastal lake in Louisiana. Then northward again to the Circle with a mate, and southward again, until one morning on Mattamuskeet a far flung pellet of number four shot smashed the delicate articulation of his right wing and brought him down to skulk helplessly amid the cattails until a mink found him finally. We're not cruel, but we are damnably thoughtless."

Each and everyone of us know and have experienced several or most of the situations that cause cripple and dead bird losses and as sportsmen we should make it our job to figure ways and means of reducing this terrible wastage. We talk of marsh drainage, predators, poor breeding seasons, illegal kill (what are we doing when we kill at least 5 birds to take four home), legal kill, and at the same time practically ignore a loss of some 5 million plus birds that could be saved each year if we could completely eliminate cripple and downed bird loss. We know it's impossible to do away with all cripple and dead bird loss, but we can and must cut the figure of 25 percent by a substantial degree.

Sportsmen are gratified when the federal service, the state or a private organization restores a waterfowl ground. How it pleases the boys to hear of violators who are picked up with even one extra bird, — and, oh-boy, what a grand feeling it is to hear of a poaching

and market shooting ring being broken by our field officers!

But how about the large proportion of real honest to goodness sportsmen that make up the 2 million odd duck stamp purchasers? Are we all lily-white? When we take a long chance, fail to rake that downed bird, or get a little bit lazy in getting out after that downed bird, we do add one more bird, we add another cipher to a seasonal total that quite likely exceeds by millions the number of waterfowl killed by poachers and market shooters.

How shall we, as individuals, attack this big problem? I wish I knew all the answers — fact is, I'd settle for even a small part of the answers. One statement made by our friend Ira N. Gabrielson, pretty well sums up the job cut out for us: "One of the ways in which you and I as individual duck hunters can help in reducing the tragic cripple loss is to adjust our standards of sportsmanship to meet the conditions."

In considering what some of the adjustments of sportsmanship must be, the whole proposition boils down to about four big considerations:

1. *Re-examine the meaning of sportsmanship:* This is our individual inner-self and only you can make the change.
2. *Common sense in gun handling:* Only through education in the proper use of a gun can some humans become a sportsman and an intelligent shooter. It's rarely the fault of the gun or the shells, when cripples or tragedy nears a hunter — it's the mechanism behind it.
3. *Use of a dog:* One of the greatest assets to good wildlife conservation — man's best friend (and biggest expense). The use of a well-trained retriever is a necessity in every type of shooting and one that is indispensable in waterfowling.
4. *Retrieving your birds:* The whole theme of our discussion revolves around this statement. The logical approach in this game is to get out in the field, locate your game and then when conditions and situation warrant, make a clean kill.

A dead bird on the water is still not a bird in the bag! With old shag-mop to hop out and make a pretty retrieve, the whole combination of season, companionship and real sportsmanship is welded into that exhilarating moment of blood-tingling action of clean shooting and beautiful retrieve. But the dogless gunner is there to haunt us! The intention of the dogless gunner is honest but the situation that man and duck create often means wastage of birds — birds falling away from shore and especially in coastal waters create a tough problem.

No service, state or federal, can effectively prevent or legislate against cripple loss — this is a responsibility laid squarely upon your shoulders. Twenty-five percent more than the estimated kill — some 5 billion ducks — go down the rathole, and *only you* can put in the plug to stop the drain.



### **Pet Bass in Halifax Pond**

Game Warden Ralph Austin, of Clover, Virginia, tells us a tale which he says has already "caused a lot of talk in Halifax County."

Mr. P. P. Guill, he reports, has a small half-acre farm pond which is stocked with bream and bass. Mr. Guill "has actually tamed a couple of adult bass to the point that they will follow him around the pond and eat right out of his hand. I know this is true because at Mr. Guill's request I went over and fed the fish myself. They will come in to shore until their backs are out of water to get a minnow out of your hand. He has named them *Big Pete* (about 12 inches) and *Little Pete* (about 9 inches).

Warden Austin says he would like to know if this is rare happening or if it is considered easy to tame a fish to this extent. We know of a similar situation in Chesterfield County. What do our readers say?

### **Habitat Planting Contest Won By Lexington Student**

District Game Technician James W. Engle, Jr., of Staunton, and County Soil Conservationist Earl Edwards have announced the results of a habitat planting contest which they directed in Rockbridge County. The competition was sponsored by the county under the supervision of the U. S. Soil Conservation Service and the Virginia Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries.

Joseph Goodbar, of Lexington, an Ellinger High School student, received first prize, a pump Remington rifle, for his food planting patch for quail and rabbits. Runners-up were Billy Watts, Russell Elliott, and Clinton Anderson, all of Lexington. Second prize was a pair of field glasses, third a casting rod and reel and fourth a fly rod and reel.

Judges were Mr. Engle, C. H. Shaffer, project leader for the Game Commission, and Hal Myers, Jr., assistant game technician, of Forks of Buffalo.

Projects of this type are made possible by the Pittman-Robertson Act, through the use of excise taxes on arms and ammunition. County money to help buy seed comes from the sale of bear and deer stamps.

### **'Coon Shops in Charlotte County**

Game Warden D. L. (Dick) Tharpe has a story to stop all recent skepticism about the 'coon population of Charlotte County. Not only are there

himself at the end of his meat case. The 'coon ambled the length of the case and sauntered unconcernedly out the back door.

A local newsboy backs up the story by his statement that soon after dawn on the same day he had noticed an apprehensive long-nosed animal crouched on the steps of the local "Alphabet" outlet, just a few doors from the supermarket.

But local 'coon hounds have not been available for comment.

### **Subscriptions to Virginia Wildlife for Winners in Franklin County Wildlife Contest**

C. H. Shaffer, state game technician, has sent in a report on the unusual and successful food and cover planting program of the Rocky Mount Chapter of the Future Farmers of America in Franklin County.

Besides credit for food and cover projects, recognition was given also for leaving grain unharvested, building squirrel den boxes, leaving brush piles for rabbits, keeping pets confined during game breeding season, for activity with "Keep Virginia Green" crews and for familiarity with local game and fish laws.

Subscriptions to VIRGINIA WILDLIFE to the top winners: Gary Ikenberry, of Rocky Mount, first; Elwood Oakes, of Penhook, second; Arthur Campbell, of Penhook, third; and junior winner, Elton Cudiff, of Glade Hill.

Agriculture Instructor E. J. Robertson and County Game Warden Gordon T. Preston devised the constructive wildlife management competition to help increase wildlife populations.

### **Human Odors Scare Fish**

In an article by Lou Campbell in *The Fisherman Magazine* for September, a report is made clinching a hunch that fish are repelled by human odors.

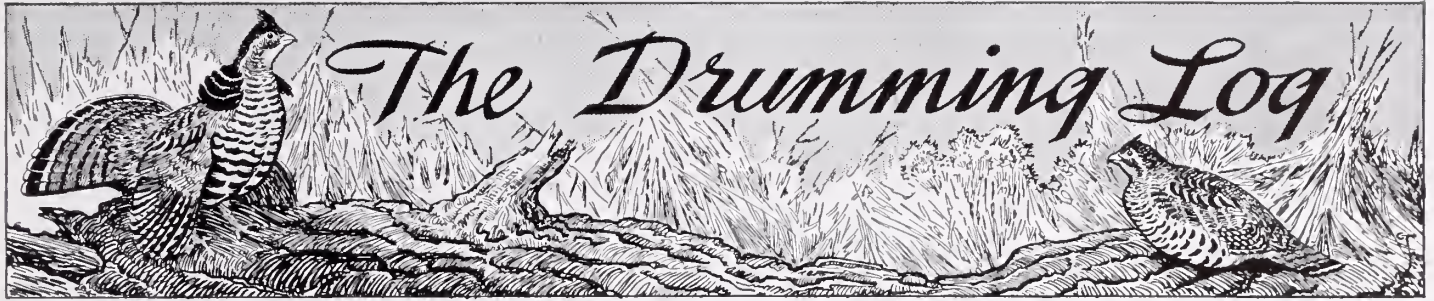


"Wanna rest?"

'coons in the county, but enough to have an occasional brush with the local merchants.

E. B. Canada, of Drakes Branch, operator of a local supermarket, reports that on a recent Saturday morning his first customer was a blase ringtail which he noticed eyeing the shelves of canned roe and fillets. Somewhat at a loss as to his bargaining power with this species, Mr. Canada opened the back door and stationed





### **Advertising Pays—In Conservation of Whooping Cranes**

Every September, October and November the word goes out through the critical migration area of the whooping cranes — the world's last remaining flock — especially in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas: "Please don't shoot at *any* large white bird."

And the conservation publicity has been paying off in slowly restoring the dwindling flock. There were six more whoopers in the Texas-Canadian flock last spring than there were 15 years ago when intensive protection began. Experts believe the big birds have more than a fighting chance now if the public continues its cooperation and lets the birds fly south again this fall in safety.

There were disastrous losses during the migrations of 1950, 1951 and 1952 when 24 birds failed to make it to their winter quarters in Texas. But last year all 21 birds completed their two-way trip safely plus a dividend of three young birds.

The birds started to leave Canada in late September and the migration will continue into early November when the last stragglers usually arrive. Let's hope they all make it again this year.

### **'Possums on the Move**

North America's only marsupial, the opossum, is continuing its invasion of northern territory. Already known to be inhabiting nearly half of Connecticut, reports are now coming from New Hampshire that the curious little animal has recently shown up in the towns of Londonderry and Lyman and one was found dead on the road just outside Jefferson.

### **More Visitors to Federal Wildlife Refuges**

A record number of people used the 272 national wildlife refuge areas for fishing, camping, boating, picnicking, nature study and other recreational purposes during the calendar year 1953. The total of 4,686,909 people represents a 10 percent increase over the 1952 figure.

The refuges which attracted the most visitors were the Wichita Mountains in Oklahoma and Crab Orchard in southern Illinois.

The national wildlife refuges in the continental United States, Hawaii, Puerto Rico and Alaska make



"Darling! I missed you, even if no one else did!"

their greatest contribution to the nation's recreation in the production and protection of wildlife, particularly migratory waterfowl, in order to insure the perpetuation of the sport of wildfowling for several million hunters. On nearly all refuges, except during periods of waterfowl concentration, fishing is permitted in accordance with state laws and regulations. On a few refuges, which are large enough to accommodate limited hunting, the Service, in cooperation with state conservation departments

has permitted public shooting on small portions of the areas, as at Big Levels on the George Washington National Forest.

### **Dip in Duck Stamp Sales**

Secretary of the Interior Douglas McKay has announced that duck stamp sales for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1954, were slightly below the all-time high of the previous year.

A total of 2,271,430 stamps of the 1953-54 issue was sold to hunters of migratory waterfowl, conservationists and philatelists, a figure which was 25,198 below last year's record. Texas was first on the list with a sale of 230,391, displacing California which had been tops among the states in sales for the five previous years. Minnesota, Michigan, Wisconsin and Illinois were the states ranking next in number of sales. A total of 20,549 stamps were sold in Virginia.

### **Texas Experiments With Plastic Fish Tag**

The Texas Game and Fish Commission is experimenting with the use of a new light weight plastic disc tag in an effort to complete studies of white bass in Lake Texoma. The new tag is attached to the body behind the dorsal fin. The old light metal tags were attached to the jaw, around the lip and, it is believed, possible interference with feeding might have been responsible for low returns. The new tag has a nylon filament which goes through the body where it will not interfere with normal functions.

### **Big Bear Population In California**

California boasts a black bear population of 25,000 bruins. Most sportsmen use dogs and horses in the rugged bear country. Hunters took more than 5,000 bears last year.

# Wildlife Questions and Answers

**Ques.:** Is there any open hunting season in Shenandoah National Park?

**Ans.:** No, National Parks are wildlife sanctuaries. Hunting and possession of firearms in the parks is prohibited by federal regulation.

**Ques.:** Are there bag limits on mink, opossum and raccoon?

**Ans.:** During the open season, there are no bag limits on opossum and mink, but the bag limit for raccoon during the hunting season is 3 a day, 20 a season, except in National Forest areas where the limit is 2 a day and 12 a season and in Scott County where it is 1 a day and 3 a season, individual or organized hunt.

**Ques.:** Are deer antlers composed of the same material as the horns of other animals?

**Ans.:** No. Antlers are made of solid bone and are shed once each year by a clean break near the skull while horns have only a bony core surrounded by a horny sheath and are a permanent fixture, never shed except in the case of the prong-horned antelope.

**Ques.:** Is there any basis in fact for the story of the glass snake that flies into pieces when struck and later reassembles its parts?

**Ans.:** Yes, there is some basis in fact for the astonishing story, but it is properly attached to a snakelike lizard, entirely without limbs and with a tail about twice as long as its body. The tail is fragile and when broken, its convulsively jerking sections keep an enemy busy and let the owner get away. A new tail will grow out of the stump, but, of course, it is not true that the parts of the tail are reassembled.

**Ques.:** What is an English parrot?

**Ans.:** "English parrot" is another name for the eastern evening grosbeak, which is about the size of a catbird, has a large thick pale-yellowish beak and a body which is black, white and yellow.

**Ques.:** Before restocking, in what year had the beaver become extinct in Virginia?

**Ans.:** Beaver became extinct in Virginia in about 1910, but have been making a successful comeback since restocking in recent years.

**Ques.:** Why aren't brown trout stocked by the Commission of Game and Inland Fisheries in any waters in Virginia?

**Ans.:** For several reasons. Brown trout are more carnivorous and do not do as well in combination stocking with brookies or rainbows. Brookies and rainbows co-exist in the same waters much better. Brown trout grow no larger than rainbows, are harder to raise and are not the game and aerial performers that the rainbows are; also, the majority of Virginia's trout fishermen favor the present combination used.

**Ques.:** When is the open season on quail on Gwynn's Island?

**Ans.:** There is no open season on quail on Gwynn's Island in Mathews County.



"Good morning, Henry, coffee hot?"

**Ques.:** Are there many different kinds of mice in Virginia?

**Ans.:** Yes, there is quite a variety of mice in Virginia, including meadow or field mice, stubby-tailed lemming mice, red-backed mice in the mountains, white-footed mice, deer mice, cotton mice, harvest mice, jumping mice and golden mice.

**Ques.:** What kinds of animals lived in Virginia in prehistoric times?

**Ans.:** The most ancient mammal recorded from Virginia was a Zeuglodon, an ancestor of the modern whale, which lived during the Eocene period. Fossil remains of a sperm whale, two baleen whales, a dolphin, a seal and a walrus indicate that the ocean covered the coastal plain during the Miocene epoch. Fossil remains of one species of camel, of mastodons and woolly mammoths, ancient bison, horses, tapirs, bears and lions have been found here. In 1805 Jefferson discovered remains of a giant ground sloth.

**Ques.:** Can you tell me what pohickory is?

**Ans.:** According to early Virginia historians Beverley and Strachey, the Indians of Virginia used to gather a great quantity of hickory nuts which they placed in mortars into which water had been poured. They pounded the shell and kernel until a milky liquor, known as pohickory, was produced. This was used either as a refreshing drink, or as a sauce for boiled beans, peas and pumpkins.

**Ques.:** Is it true that a wild goose has the same mate all its life?

**Ans.:** Yes, the common Canada goose, also called wild goose, honker and long-necked goose, has been called "a model of domestic faithfulness." According to Edward Howe Forbush, "Ordinarily a pair is mated for life. The young birds usually mate and breed in the third year. While the female incubates, the male keeps guard over her, and he is so strong and fierce in her defense that he will drive a fox, deer, or even an elk away from the nest."

**Ques.:** Is the cougar still found anywhere in Virginia?

**Ans.:** Although at one time the cougar, also called a panther or mountain lion, evidently had statewide distribution and was still being hunted in the 1880s in the mountain counties, but apparently disappeared soon afterwards. It has since been reported in a number of places, but none of the observations has been satisfactorily authenticated.

**Ques.:** How many snakes are there in North America and how many of them are poisonous?

**Ans.:** According to Karl P. Schmidt and D. Dwight Davis of the Chicago Natural History Museum, of the 223 snakes of the United States and Canada, 52 are poisonous, but only 36 of them are at all dangerous.

**Ques.:** Can you tell me some birds and animals which are named for Virginia?

**Ans.:** Yes, there are a number of birds and animals which carry the name of Virginia in either their common or scientific names: the Virginia rail (*Rallus limicola limicola*, Vieillot); the eastern cardinal's other name of Virginia redbird, *Richmondia cardinalis cardinalis* (Linnaeus); the eastern bobwhite's scientific name of *Colinus virginianus virginianus* (Linnaeus); the white-tailed deer, *Odocoileus virginianus virginianus* (Boddaert); the opossum, *Didelphis virginiana virginiana*, Kerr; the varying hare, *Lepus americanus virginianus*, Harlan; and the cotton rat, *Sigmodon hispidus virginianus*, Gardner.



# DEER . . . BEAR . . . TURKEY HUNTERS

Do you want to help your Game Commission make better recommendations for your future hunting pleasure? Then be sure to tag your deer, bear or turkey promptly at a local checking station.

Remember, the numbers checked, the sex and age of the game have everything to do with our knowledge of the status of game populations and the resulting decisions on next year's seasons and bag limits.

Be sure that the station operator gets the following information on your tag:

1. Deer — be sure that the sex is correct
2. Bear — be sure that the sex is correct and also have it weighed if possible
3. Turkey — get the bird accurately weighed (to the ounce) and leave a breast feather attached to the tag

Better yet, bring your kill to one of the biologist-manned aging stations. Watch for announcements in your local paper.

Of the many local check stations over the state, biologists plan to be at the following places on the dates shown.

<u>County</u>	<u>Area</u>	<u>Dates</u>
Shenandoah	Edinburg, Columbia Furnace	Nov. 20
Rockingham	Rawley Springs	" 15-16
Augusta	North River, Big Levels	" 15-16-20
Highland	Headwaters	" 20
Bath	Back Creek, Bath Alum, Millboro Springs	" 20
Craig	Newcastle	" 15-16
Grayson	Comer's Rock	" 15-16
Giles	Big Stony	" 15-16
Washington	Feathercamp	" 15-16
Smyth	Sugar Grove	" 15-16
Wise-Scott	Glades Area	" 15-16
Prince George	Brandon	Dec. 22-23
Sussex		" 22-23
James City	(to be announced)	Jan. 5
Charles City		" 5



# We're Bringing You Early Christmas News!

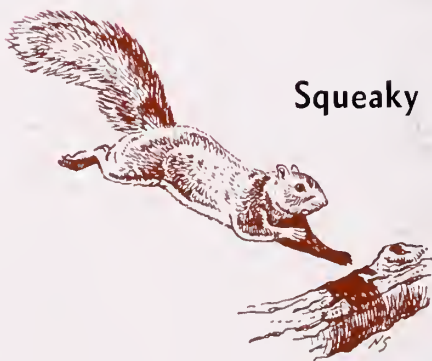
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